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ABSTRACT

Should counselors today be concerned about gender roles and gender-based issues? Haven't gender-based problems been solved by the extensive interventions of the last 25 years? The answers to these questions are a resounding yes to the first and no to the second. This paper examines gender advocacy, and the values assumptions undergirding it, largely in relation to equity and non-violence. Advocacy strategies and resources are presented throughout the paper. This paper also discusses the need for gender-based advocacy, barriers based on gender, and mixed signs of progress. A rationale for advocacy, the historical context of gender, a systems intervention strategy, gender advocacy across cultures, interventions for boys and men, gender-based advocacy strategies, continuing advocacy for girls and women, new advocacy for boys and men, and strategies in counselor education are also examined. An ultimate ideal or goal for gender advocacy is to awaken "critical consciousness" of the importance and power of gender in one's life, of how it relates to and affects other identities, of how it interacts with the contextual and cultural issues, and how we can through advocacy transform the organizations, institutions, and communities which perpetuate violent and inequitable treatment of human beings. (Contains 16 references and lists 5 additional resources.) (MKA)

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Chapter Ten

Gender-based Advocacy for Equity and Non-violence

Sunny Hansen

Should counselors today be concerned about gender roles and gender-based issues? Haven't we solved all the gender-based problems with the extensive interventions of the last 25 years? My answers to these questions are a resounding yes to the first and no to the second. I will discuss gender advocacy, and the values assumptions undergirding it, largely in relation to equity and non-violence. Advocacy strategies and resources appear throughout the paper.

The Need for Gender-Based Advocacy

While the U.S. has made considerable progress in reducing sexism, gender bias, and gender discrimination, there is still a long way to go to create a society of gender equity and non-violence which will reduce oppressions, expand options, and remove barriers to opportunity for girls and boys of all backgrounds. Although there are those who do not want to believe there is still a problem, indications from many studies, publications, and men's and women's "lived experience" are that gender barriers and issues still exist. They have been minimized perhaps because, while we have become aware of multiple forms of discrimination, gender discrimination seems less important. Although all forms of violence are deplorable, violence against women persists in spite of changing laws and norms which try to reduce it, e.g. sexual harassment, rape and sexual assault, and domestic battering.

Unique issues exist with regard to gender and multicultural counseling. In spite of controversy over whether multiculturalism should be defined narrowly or broadly, the multicultural literature is increasingly inclusive, defining the multiple dimensions of identity as race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, sexual

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orientation, age, disability, and language. Gender identity is one of the dimensions still important to many men and women, but it must be examined in relation to the salience of other forms of identity to a particular person. It is unfortunate, I believe, that although gender is a thread which runs through all cultures, it often is not recognized as an issue. Postmodern thinkers suggest that gender is a characteristic which has been constructed by society, that it has caused us to inappropriately focus on gender differences, and that it should be deconstructed. This school of thought is similar in some ways to those who suggest that individuals gain gender knowledge early in life, develop dichotomous thinking about male and female roles, and need to transcend them so that all individuals will have access to the full range of emotions, feelings, and behaviors—and I would add, opportunities.

Advocacy is needed to combat violence against women and devaluing of women, as well as in salary and promotion differentials, occupational segregation, and in gender-biased counseling. While gender issues have been perceived as "women's issues" for many decades, there is beginning recognition of issues unique to boys and men. The most frequently mentioned male problems are with reading and writing, aggressive behavior, dropping out of school, incarceration, and restricted emotionality. An assumption of this article is that gender role issues affect both sexes and that both boys and girls need to be free of violence and discrimination, have opportunities to consider all options, develop their potentials, contribute to community, and become self-sufficient, connected, and respected human beings.

Barriers Based on Gender

An abundance of contextual data shows that negative stereotypes and socialization continue to create barriers for girls of all backgrounds, in spite of progress in inclusion and representation of formerly excluded and underrepresented groups. These barriers are exacerbated for women and girls of color or disability. Yet a proliferation of sports bars, adult shows, "sex entertainment" bars, certain TV programs, and web pornography, along with predominantly male faces in Congress, government, corporations, and board rooms, remind us of the dominant male values in positions of power and of sexist attitudes which still prevail and keep women from taking their place as equal partners.

Although more than half of U.S. women are in the workforce

in every state except West Virginia, and they have greater access to such fields as medicine, law, finance, veterinary medicine, accounting, and dentistry, they continue to dominate in traditional women's fields of study (e.g., education, childcare, nursing, and office work). They are still underrepresented in the hard science fields such as physics, engineering and computer technology; salaries are not equitable for women and men working in the same field, and white collar women earn 72% compared to their male counterparts. On the other hand, men are also victims of violence; they are not rushing into nurturing, caring fields, partly because caring is not valued, the pay is less, and stereotypes continue about what is appropriate as women's work and men's work. Work and family conflicts in two-earner heterosexual families continue to be viewed as women's issues.

Mixed Signs of Progress

That progress in gender issues such as educational equity has been made for women is illustrated most dramatically by the fact that women now surpass men in percentages in college graduate and undergraduate programs. By 2008, if the trend continues, college women will outnumber men by 9.2 million to 6.9 million. One reason for this is that men are choosing to enter the high-paying computer jobs for which they are being sought and skipping a college education. What this portends for the future is uncertain in terms of relationships between women and men and men's preparation for roles in family, parenting, and citizenship. Instrumental values of computer technology are being stressed in such recruiting, and expressive values of women again seem to be considered less important. One author recently suggested that having more women on campus should not be a concern. He asks, "Is the overrepresentation of women in agriculture a bigger problem than their underrepresentation in technology? He suggests that if women reach parity with men in higher education, "they are also likely to make greater strides in the professions, and we will have to learn to live with a world of increasing gender equality."

I would in no way suggest that gender is always the primary equity issue. Valerie Lee and her associates at the University of Michigan analyzed the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) data on eighth and tenth graders and concluded that, although gender equity is still a problem, social class was a greater barrier to opportunity than either race or gender.

While there is evidence that both sexes are affected by gender

equity issues, recent documents still focus mainly on the educational status and opportunity of girls and women. In the 1990s a number of publications of the American Association of University Women documented several aspects of gender equity for women. The most controversial was *How Schools Shortchange Girls* (1992), which conducted a thorough review of literature and studied both girls and boys, including children of color. *Hostile Hallways* (1995) studied sexual harassment and found a majority of both boys and girls experienced harassment at some time in their schools. What schools are doing to help girls succeed is reported in *GROWING SMART: What's Working for Girls in Schools* (995)in which the authors suggest that themes important to girls (e.g. identity, centrality, caring adults, academic achievement, and opportunity to realize dreams) often are also important to boys. The authors also emphasize that systems interventions involving students, parents, school personnel, and community are essential.

The most recent study, *Gender Gaps: Where Schools Still Fail Our Children* (1998), provides strong evidence of both progress and a continuing need for school-based and community-based interventions. Researchers state that equitable education usually implies quality education and equal opportunities for all students and addresses the needs of both girls and boys. They found that class organization, teaching styles, teacher-student interactions, role models, and equipment tend to favor boys. They also found persistent problems in areas such as course-taking patterns, assessment, standards, extracurricular activities, and career choice. A study on the *Educational Status of Girls and Women in the Nation* was due to be presented to Congress on January 1, 1999, but it was not yet available from the Equity Resource Center at Newton, Massachusetts, at this writing. What is needed now are more studies of the role and status of both boys and girls, their interactive effects, and creative interventions for both.

Rationale for Advocacy

Evidence of the need for advocacy of gender equity for our clients is embedded in much of what has been said above. All the problems of achieving gender equity and reducing violence and multiple forms of discrimination have not been solved in spite of the hundreds of interventions developed and implemented since the 70s. Issues of inequity, female subordination, socialization, and stereotyping are so ingrained that they do not disappear in one generation. Efforts to get women (and men) into nontraditional

occupations have not been entirely successful.

Gender in Historical Context

It is about 25 years since the Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) and Title IX were passed to provide girls and women educational equity and prohibit discrimination in educational institutions. Although great progress has been made in areas such as sports, even there inequities and stereotypes continue, as the University of Minnesota Tucker Center on Girls and Women in Sports attests. Other legislation such as Equal Employment Opportunity, Sexual Harassment, and Affirmative Action Executive Orders (now under fire in some states) was enacted to ensure the rights of specific groups. Because women comprise more than half of these populations, gender issues are involved in all of them. Non-governmental organizations also have been created to address specific issues, such as women's centers, rape and sexual assault centers, battered women's centers, and a few men's centers. While the U.S. is farther along than some countries on a continuum of change, there is still much to do to eliminate the now more subtle forms of gender bias.

A Systems Intervention Strategy

Because gender equity was viewed as a "women's issue" in the 70s, little attention was paid to boys. One intervention for both girls and boys which has continued is the BORN FREE Program at the University of Minnesota, a national counseling-based program built around the concepts of career development, gender role stereotyping and socialization, and educational and social change. Its assumptions are that negative stereotyping affects both sexes, that no one is to blame because it is part of our socialization, that stereotypes and other barriers exist at home, in the media, in our communities, and throughout the educational spectrum, and that since both men and women are affected, both need to work on the problems.

BORN FREE's purpose is to Build Options, Reassess Norms, and Free Roles through Educational Equity. It is an indirect intervention, creating videos and print materials to train educators and parents on how to reduce career-related sex-role stereotyping, expand options for both girls and boys, and teach participants how to be change agents in their own institutions. It is an advocacy program. One of the first programs funded under WEEA, it involved

14 educational institutions K-college and faculty and graduate students in counseling, higher education, and teacher education. They developed and piloted the materials to reduce the barriers and increase the facilitators of career development of both sexes. The BORN FREE videos, training packets, literature reviews, and change process reports were disseminated by WEEA for 14 years, an unusually long shelf life. Funds are now being sought to update them. Although on a skeletal budget, BORN FREE recently has been re-envisioned as a center for applied research and interventions and expanded to focus on gender, culture, and career. It also has an international electronic listserv with subscribers from many countries.

Many new teachers (including counselors) being trained today have not had the exposure to gender equity training common in the 70s. Gender equity is simply not as visible or important a topic in elementary, secondary, or higher education. Direct interventions with students themselves are needed at all levels, and indirect interventions such as many developed in the 70s are also needed. Girls and boys need to learn early in life to work as partners in reducing problems of violence, inequity and other social justice issues in their own institutions and communities.

Gender Advocacy Across Cultures

There are many reasons that gender advocacy is needed across cultures. Societies are changing, demographics are changing, workplaces are changing, families are changing, and gender roles are changing. Increasingly we are realizing that we need to change systems to meet individual needs and not change individuals to fit society or the status quo. Challenging issues exist when the norms and values of immigrants from other cultures clash with majority of Western cultures, especially in relation to gender roles and family norms. Gender issues exist across global cultures, and it is essential that counselors and counselor educators develop a global perspective about them. In some cultures the problems are more severe and extreme. For example, few counselors, if they have any commitment to human rights and democratic freedoms, would condone the violence against women by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Some call it "gendercide." Violence against women has been institutionalized to the extent that women are being raped, put in prison, and totally dehumanized. They cannot go to school, practice medicine, use male doctors to get medical care for themselves or their children, or expose any part

of their body. Issues of infanticide, dowry bride burning, (and hate crimes in the U.S.) and inequality in education, law, health, and property are other global examples. These are clearly human rights issues.

In spite of our need to respect culture, it is important to help our students and professionals understand that there some universal or superordinate values which transcend culture, values that have to do with democratic principles of human dignity and respect. With the growing ACA interest in international issues and collaboration, some form of outreach to Afghan women, and other dehumanized women, is imperative. One political strategy is to lobby Congress to ratify the United Nations Convention to Eliminate All forms of Discrimination against Women.

Intervention for Boys and Men

While gender roles affect men as well as women, there have not been as many interventions to help men change their role or status. Joseph Pleck, James O'Neil, Thomas Skovholt, and Murray Sher are among the few counseling psychologists who have addressed male issues such as male gender role strain, men's role in the family, men's career and economic issues, aggression, and emotionality issues. Perhaps the most publicized interventions are those to assist Black males, such as those developed by Courtland Lee (1989). Besides the religious-based Promise Keepers, who advocate women's subordinate status and the dominance of men, special initiatives have been created to help men become more nurturing, express feelings, resolve conflicts, become better fathers, and become involved in child care, especially as custodial fathers.

Gender-Based Advocacy Strategies

Counselors can be advocates for diverse clients affected by gender oppression as they can for other kinds of problems. The young high school girl being harassed by boys (or other girls) needs someone to support her. The adolescent girl who is anorexic or bulimic needs help from sensitive well-trained counselors and other mental health professionals skilled in addressing these psychological and body image issues. The victim of rape needs to know that caring persons in the legal and social services system understand the trauma she has experienced and can help her develop a counseling plan for recovery. The battered woman needs

a support group and agencies, counselors, and social workers who can help her survive emotionally, move beyond the victim status, get legal assistance, housing, child care and a job—and escape the situation if it cannot be changed. Resilience in battered women has been documented, but the women need to know the system is working for, not against them. Clients of both sexes experience trauma and stress and need help from gender-aware, culturally sensitive counselors.

Continuing Advocacy for Girls and Women

The most important strategies are those which are preventive. As the above narrative illustrates, a great deal has been done in the last quarter century, but what is there left to do?

- Across cultures, while women have made progress in education and health, they remain underrepresented in government and business, especially at top levels. Political activism is needed to gain more diversity in top policy-making bodies and boards.
- Women still have a long way to go to achieve equity in the hard sciences, engineering, and computer technology. Programs to increase computer literacy and competencies of girls and women need to grow. Those such as the Computer Equity Expert Project Jo Sanders developed in Manhattan (1993) provide an excellent model.
- Women are still greatly underrepresented in the trades, where many of the highly paid jobs are. Helping girls and women choose and prepare for "nontraditional jobs" is still a big challenge. Unfortunately, many initiatives funded under the School to Work Act are not helping gender equity, in spite of equity requirements in the 1994 Act. It is quite ironic that, while the U.S. Congress has appropriated millions of dollars for STW, the WEEA allocation for 1999 was $600,000. As school counselors work more closely with curriculum and systematic interventions, they can become agents of change in programs that promote equity and non-violence, as well as gender-fair career development, for girls and boys of all backgrounds.
- In sports participation as well as observation, the U.S. is still a male-dominated culture (witness the Super Bowl mania). Politically working toward more balance in sports participation and appropriations is one strategy.

Encouraging girls and women to develop physical skills and team participation is another. Providing role models, striving to eliminate stereotypes of women in sports, and challenging TV and other media portrayals are others.

- Overall we still have a sex-segregated society, in the workplace and in some parts of education, and in leisure activities. Problems increase for older adults, especially women, as myths and stereotypes still prevail. Counseling interventions are needed to reduce violence, create opportunities, and increase accuracy in portrayal, balance, and representation of girls and women of all backgrounds.

New Advocacy for Boys and Men

Some of the earlier statements about systems interventions and advocacy apply to boys as well as to girls, though the differential power in relationships, work, and educational systems needs to be kept in mind. Possible strategies for reducing negative stereotypes affecting male socialization include the following:

- Develop school and college programs designed to help boys and young men deal with their unique needs and issues, e.g. how to succeed in nontraditional roles, how to communicate better, how to show affection, how to control aggression, how to deal with changes in women's roles. One example is to integrate age-appropriate guidance units on boys' developmental issues at different educational levels.
- Advocate for the importance of getting a college education and a liberal education in order to become whole persons before succumbing to recruiters for computer jobs.
- Develop mentor programs so boys and young men are exposed to a variety of lifestyles, including men in egalitarian roles.
- Create learning experiences in which boys can work in nontraditional roles such as child care assistant or volunteer in a nursing home.
- Teach boys conflict resolution and mediation to avoid violence, especially against women; also to show empathy and stand up for victims of trauma, especially rape, sexual assault, and battering.
- Incorporate knowledge of such topics as stereotyping and socialization, domestic violence, and equity into teacher and counselor education programs.

- Advocate for legislation for a MEEP—Men's Educational Equity Program— to educate boys and men—but not taking still needed funds away from women.
- Develop preventive programs for boys at risk and likely to drop out, have learning or emotional difficulties, or end up homeless or in the correctional system.
- Teach boys that the very real gender role changes in society may mean positive gains for men as well as women. This will become more evident as women and men tell their stories—especially of their relationships as equal partners.

Advocacy Strategies for Both Sexes

Although gender issues were virtually left out of educational reform of the 1980s, it is important that they not be left out again in the 90s. Unfortunately the linear and instrumental focus of school-to-work programs which dominate educational reform at present threatens again. Below are a few additional strategies which counselors can use for both sexes.

- Help girls and boys, men and women understand their rights under the law—whether sexual harassment, pay equity, bias and discrimination in education, counseling, or work.
- Help both boys and girls get involved in action learning and servic learning in which they can share roles and function as equals to remove some of the stereotypes and contribute to community.
- Help both understand that old stereotyped roles—girls as nurturers and boys as providers—limit the development of both and that both need self-sufficiency and connectedness.
- Help both to work on eliminating oppressions related to being male and female.
- Collaborate with teachers to create units for both sexes on work and family.
- Teach both girls and boys nonviolent conflict resolution and mediation.
- Advocate for systems change (schools, colleges, and workplaces) which foster student development for broad life roles and options.
- Provide models of equality and egalitarian relationships that help girls and boys of all backgrounds to treat each

other as equals and with respect.

- Create training programs to help parents understand gender issues and ways in which stereotyping, bias, discrimination, and subtle policies and practices can limit options for their children or young adults. Also teach them how to be change agents in schools and colleges.

Strategies in Counselor Education

One gender issue especially important in counselor education is that of incorporating new knowledge about women and men and new ways of knowing into training programs. The new theories of women's relational identity and self-in-relation are beginning to gain acceptance in counseling psychology. Qualitative research which complements empirical research and the logical positivist position is finding its way into professional counseling journals. "Agency-in-communion" is recognized as a goal for men as well as women. New knowledge in multicultural counseling is being integrated, where values of harmony, connectedness, wholeness, communal values, and subjective experience are more important than the Western values of fragmentation, autonomy, rationalism, and competition. Advocacy is needed for recognition of women as theorists and researchers in counseling psychology, along with multicultural theorists—and the new constructivist knowledge about gender and culture.

Conclusion

Gender-based advocacy, which focused heavily on educational equity for reducing violence against women in the last two decades, has made important strides. But the democratic goals of providing equal opportunity and equitable education for girls and boys still need attention, continuing old efforts but also adding new, with close attention to unfinished business for girls and women and new initiatives for boys and men. The new model for the "Multiple Dimensions of Identity" advanced by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) has helped us put some of the identity issues in perspective. The nine primary dimensions of identity include gender. We know that different dimensions may be important to a person at different stages of life. For example, in my own experience, in the high school years, social class was the major dimension, since we had little money and no expectation for me to go to college. As a beginning college

professor, I became acutely aware of sexism in academe, and gender for the first time became more dominant. As I think now about a career transition, my identity as an older adult becomes more central.

For most persons of color, race and ethnicity are likely the most important dimension. The question should not be a competitive one of which identity is most important; rather, it should be, which of the multiple dimensions of identity is most important to this client, with this history, at this time, in this culture, and how does it affect her or his other identities and well-being? Those identities most associated with oppression, discrimination, and violence often will be the ones we emphasize. The need for counselor advocacy for gender-based issues remains because male-female relationship issues and violence and equity issues still need attention.

An ultimate ideal or goal for gender advocacy is to awaken "critical consciousness" of the importance and power of gender in one's life, of how it relates to and affects other identities, of how it interacts with the contextual and cultural issues, and through advocacy we can transform the organizations, institutions, and communities which perpetuate violent and inequitable treatment of human beings.

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Additional Resources

WEEA Equity Resource Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02158—800-225-3088—email:weeapub@edc.org www.edc.org/WomensEquity

Wellesley College Centers for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA

National Council on Research on Women